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ABSTRACT

The Montgomery County (Maryland) Public School system is currently in its second year of a multiyear evaluation of the ESOL/bilingual program. The focus of the first year's effort was an analysis of test results and teacher evaluations of the overall classroom performance of over 3,000 students receiving ESOL/bilingual services. Findings were as follows: (1) Student performance in English as measured by the Language Assessment Scale (LAS), published by Linguametrics Group, correlated well with student performance on a Montgomery County developed instrument, the Minimum English Competency (MEC) Test. Correlations of .7 or better were observed for comparable subtests and total scores. (2) For 1,400 students tested in fall and spring of the same school year, statistically significant gains were observed for LAS and MEC results at all grade levels. (3) When teacher evaluations of students' classroom performance were compared to test scores for Asian and Hispanic students, it was found that Asian students were evaluated higher than their Hispanic peers by their teachers, even though the Hispanic students demonstrated as much or more language proficiency on the LAS and MEC. (Author)

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VARIABLES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF ESOL/BILINGUAL STUDENTS IN NON-ESOL CLASSES

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BACKGROUND

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) provides English language instruction to students whose English proficiency is too limited for them to function effectively in regular classes. Approximately 3,200 students, most of whom are foreign born, receive such instruction each year. Students of limited English language proficiency receive language instruction in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and/or bilingual classes under the direction of the ESOL/Bilingual Division.

ESOL/Bilingual services are intended to prepare students to function with little or no supplemental English language instruction in regular MCPS classes. It is an intensive program of services that is expected to be of limited duration for any individual student. Normally, a student with limited English language skills will be enrolled in ESOL/Bilingual classes upon entry into MCPS, receive ESOL/Bilingual services in addition to other instructional services until he/she reaches exit-level English language proficiency, and will subsequently move into a regular MCPS instructional program. ESOL/Bilingual services are offered at levels ranging from beginning to advanced, depending on students' English language proficiency. A formal testing process (referred to as "entry/exit testing") has been used to evaluate students' readiness for departure from the ESOL/Bilingual program.

There are many factors that can influence ESOL students' progress in school. They have enormous diversity of cultural and educational backgrounds, and there is a great deal of variation in the amount and quality of their prior formal education. Some students require only English language instruction in

order to perform well in the regular school program, while others, barely literate in their native language, require a great deal of instruction in addition to English to bring them up to the level of their peers.

Home variables also impact greatly on ESOL students' performance in school. Asian cultures emphasize schooling, elevating the teacher to a level of paramount importance and respect. This cultural attribute is observed in the school behavior of Asian students compared to other ESOL students. Also, ESOL students come from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and bring to school the influences of these differences in financial status, urban vs. agricultural background, and overall family stability or lack thereof.

Finally, of the 3,200 ESOL/Bilingual students currently served by MCPS, approximately one-third are Asian (primarily Vietnamese), and one-third are Hispanic. Due to their substantial representation in the ESOL student population, it is believed that these two groups of students receive more varied and/or more intensive ESOL/Bilingual services, overall, than do the rest of the 50 or so language groups represented in MCPS.

THE EVALUATION DESIGN

MCPS began the evaluation of the ESOL/Bilingual program during the 1981-82 school year. The evaluation effort is planned in several stages. The first stage examined the tests used in assessing ESOL/Bilingual students' English proficiency. Student test score gains over time were also examined. The second stage of the evaluation effort is currently underway. In this stage background data and program participation information is being collected for a sample of ESOL students. The final stage of the evaluation will be to link

background data and program participation to outcome measures such as students' performance in non-ESOL classes when mainstreamed, English proficiency of the students as measured by course grades and standardized test results, and teachers' assessments of students' capabilities and performance.

Data linkages will be examined through use of Analysis of Covariance techniques. Critical questions include:

- To what extent does the intensity and variety of ESOL/Bilingual services determine post-ESOL performance? Is there a "best mix" in terms of number of months, hours per week, and variety of approaches?

- What impact does students' prior educational background have on post-ESOL success as well as performance while enrolled in ESOL/Bilingual classes?

- Is there a critical mass of same language group students, below which services become fragmented or less effective at the local school level?

- Are students of different language groups equally and appropriately served?

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

To date, analyses of the test data have been completed. Stage two, the collection of background and program data is currently underway. The findings, so far, are quite interesting but they raise some crucial questions concerning how we educate ESOL students and how we assess their knowledge.

1. The Test Battery

Assessment of ESOL/Bilingual students in MCPS was based on three types of instruments: The Language Assessment Scale (LAS), published by Linguametrics Group; the Minimum English Competency Test (MEC), a locally developed test of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and a teacher evaluation of student language proficiency. Based on analysis of test results for over 3,000 ESOL students, we have determined that the MEC correlates well with the LAS (.7 or better for comparable subtests and total scores). And, since the MEC assesses a wider range of skills than does the LAS, the LAS has been eliminated from our test battery.

2. Performance of Students Over Time

Of the 3,000 students tested in the above analysis, 1,400 were enrolled in ESOL/Bilingual classes for the entire school year and were tested in Fall 1980 as well as in Spring 1981. When Fall to Spring gains were analyzed for significance, T-tests showed the mean gains to be significant beyond the .001 level for both LAS and MEC results at all grade levels: K-2, 3-6, 7-8, and 9-12. Thus, we can say that the MCPS ESOL/Bilingual students are gaining substantial language proficiency over time, as measured by these two instruments.

3. Comparison of Test Results to Teacher Evaluations

Figures 1 and 2 show the scoring instructions for teacher evaluation instruments that are currently used by MCPS at entry and exit assessment. It may be noted that at entry, the teacher evaluates the student solely on language proficiency, but at exit other aspects of classroom performance

such as class participation and work and study habits are included. Figures 3 through 6 show standardized score means for our two major groups of ESOL/Bilingual students (Asians and Hispanics) for the LAS, the MEC, the Teacher Evaluation, and Total Battery at entry testing. Although scattered differences in performance across the three instruments and the total battery are observed, there is no consistent pattern.

Figures 7 through 10 present the same information for exit testing. The results show a distinct pattern. Asian students are evaluated higher than their Hispanic peers by their teachers, even though the Hispanic students demonstrate as much or more language proficiency on the LAS and MEC. Thus, when aspects of classroom performance other than English language proficiency are considered, teachers appear to view students of different cultural groups differentially. It must also be noted at this time that the exit teacher evaluation instrument is completed primarily by the students' non-ESOL or mainstreamed teachers. The implication, therefore, is that the non-ESOL teacher considers many aspects of classroom performance in addition to language proficiency when evaluating the students.

Hopefully, in the next year our continued examination of these students will provide us with more information concerning the most effective educational path for them. In the absence of more comprehensive data, however, it may be noted that in educating ESOL/Bilingual students we may need to broaden our focus to include more subtle aspects of behavior as well as the academic skills.

FIGURE 1

Guidelines for Scoring Structured Interview

Entry Assessment

Pronunciation

1. Pronunciation usually unintelligible.
2. Frequent pattern and structure errors make understanding difficult and make frequent repetition necessary.
3. Speech requires concentrated listening; mispronunciation leads to occasional misunderstanding.
4. Occasional mispronunciations which do not interfere with understanding.
5. No conspicuous mispronunciations, but would not be taken for a native speaker.
6. Native-like pronunciation.

Grammar

1. Grammar almost entirely inaccurate.
2. Little control of major patterns; errors frequently obscure communication.
3. Some control of major patterns; errors cause occasional misunderstanding.
4. Some major patterns still weak, but errors do not interfere with understanding.
5. Few errors, with almost native-like use of grammar patterns.
6. Native-like use of grammar patterns.

Vocabulary

1. Insufficient vocabulary for even the simplest conversation.
2. Vocabulary limited to basic personal and survival areas.
3. Inaccurate choice of words; vocabulary limited to common school-related and social topics.
4. Suffucient vocabulary to discuss special interests and to function in most everyday situations.
5. Well-developed vocabulary; can express complex ideas with precision.
6. As articulate as a native speaker of comparable age and education.

Fluency

1. Speech is so halting and fragmentary that conversation is virtually impossible.
2. Speech is very slow and uneven except for common phrases.
3. Speech is frequently hesitant and irregular.
4. Speech is occasionally hesitant with some rephrasing and groping for words.
5. Speech is effortless and smooth, but perceptibly non-native in speed and evenness.
6. Speech is as fluent as a native speaker's.

Comprehension

1. Understands too little for even the simplest type of conversation.
2. Understands only slow, very simple speech; requires constant repetition and rephrasing.
3. Understands careful, somewhat simplified speech with frequent repetition and rephrasing.
4. Understands standard speech but requires occasional repetition or rephrasing.
5. Understands normal conversation perfectly except for very colloquial or low-frequency items.
6. Understands everything in both formal and colloquial speech that a native speaker of comparable age and education would be expected to understand.

FIGURE 2

Exit Assessment

Department of Interagency, Alternative, and Supplementary Programs MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS Rockville, Maryland	ESOL STUDENT PERFORMANCE CHECKLIST Teacher Evaluation

INSTRUCTIONS The student named below is under consideration for exiting from the ESOL program. In order to predict his/her success in the mainstream, we would appreciate your judgment of his/her performance in your class. Please evaluate this student by putting an "X" on the scale where it best describes his/her performance. (Guidelines explaining each category are given on reverse side.)

Student Name	Grade	Return Competed Form To:

ESOL USE

I. Rate of Learning (ability to learn course content)
unable (0) slow (4, 8, 12) satisfactory (16, 20, 24) rapid (28, 32)

II. Academic Performance (in terms of grades)
unsatisfactory (0, 4, 8) minimal (12, 16, 20) satisfactory (24, 28, 32) good (36, 40)

III. Application (work/study habits, motivation)
no effort (0) little effort (2, 4) satisfactory (6, 8) outstanding (10, 12)

IV. Assignments (on time, complete, well done)
ignored (0) barely satisfactory (1, 2, 3) satisfactory (4, 5, 6) good (7, 8)

V. Participation in Class (active, passive)
none (0) minimal (1, 2, 3) satisfactory (4, 5, 6) good (7, 8)

- - - -

FIGURE 2 (Cont'd.)

The information obtained on these sheets does *not* evaluate the student's proficiency in English. Rather, it reflects his ability to function in mainstream classes now while still part of an ESOL program, and it will help predict his success in mainstream classes without ESOL support.

Completion of this sheet should take no more than 2-3 minutes.

The following is an explanation of each of the categories on which the teacher is being asked to evaluate the student:

I. Rate of Learning: Is the ESOL student able to learn the material of the course? If so, how fast? While there may be factors other than language proficiency which interfere with a student's learning the subject material (e.g., cognitive ability), this question deals only with the student's ability to grasp the content of the course. The teacher is asked merely to rate the student on this ability to master course goals regardless of reasons.

II. Academic Performance: How well did the student actually perform in the class as reflected by his grades and in comparison with non-ESOL students? If the student had the ability to learn and he did so, he should receive a high rating in both Rate of Learning and Academic Performance. If he had the ability but did not perform well (due to laziness, sickness, etc.) he should score high on Rate of Learning and low on Academic Performance. If he has little ability but performed as well as he was able, then he should score low on Rate of Learning and low to high on Academic Performance depending on the teacher's criteria for assigning grades.

III. Application: What are the student's study habits and work habits? Does he make the effort to learn, or doesn't he care? Is he content with minimal understanding of the course, or does he work toward learning more than the basic requirement of the course?

IV. Assignments: How well did he do the assignments, homework as well as research? Were they completed as given, and on time? Did they show effort to complete them well and to benefit from them as part of the course program, or were they done perfunctorily without thought?

V. Participation: Did the student participate actively in the class or did he/she sit passively and try to be inconspicuous? Did he ask questions when he/she did not understand, or was he/she content to "make do?" Some ESOL students are shy in using their English and they do not participate actively as a result. This is what this question wants to find out. The student should receive a low score if he does not participate, regardless of the reason.

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A & B Communication with Teacher/Peers: What are this student's abilities to express himself? Does he/she try to talk to the teacher or his/her friends in English? If so, how successful is he/she in being understood? If the teacher never talked with the student or never observed his/her interaction with other students the teacher should leave this blank.

C. Question Regarding Probable Success: The teacher should evaluate the student's probable success in the mainstream.

FIGURE 3
Entry Standardized Score Means, Grades K-2, Asians and Hispanics

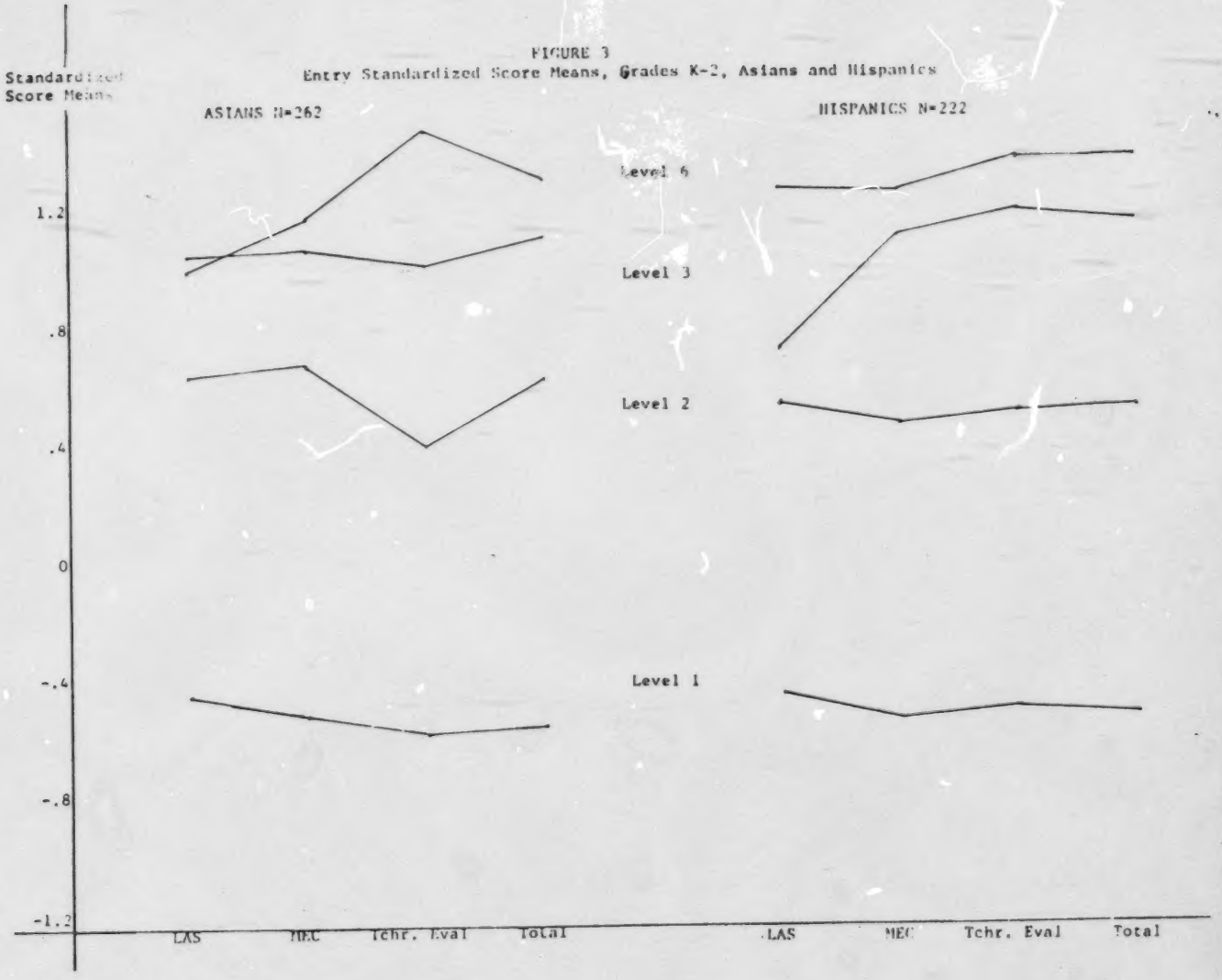

FIGURE 4
Entry Standardized Score Means, Grades 3-6, Asians and Hispanics

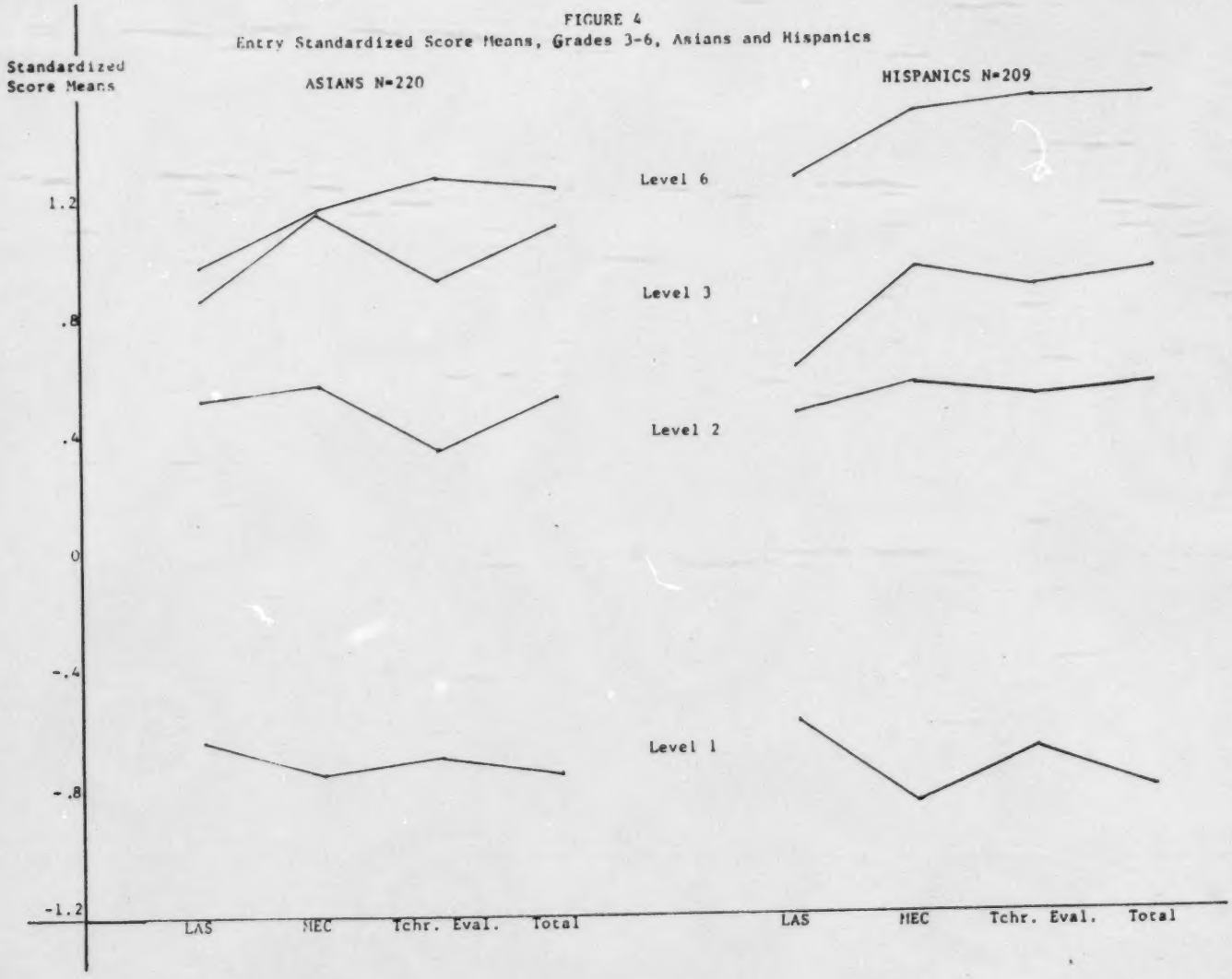

FIGURE 5
Entry Standardized Score Means, Grades 7-8, Asians and Hispanics

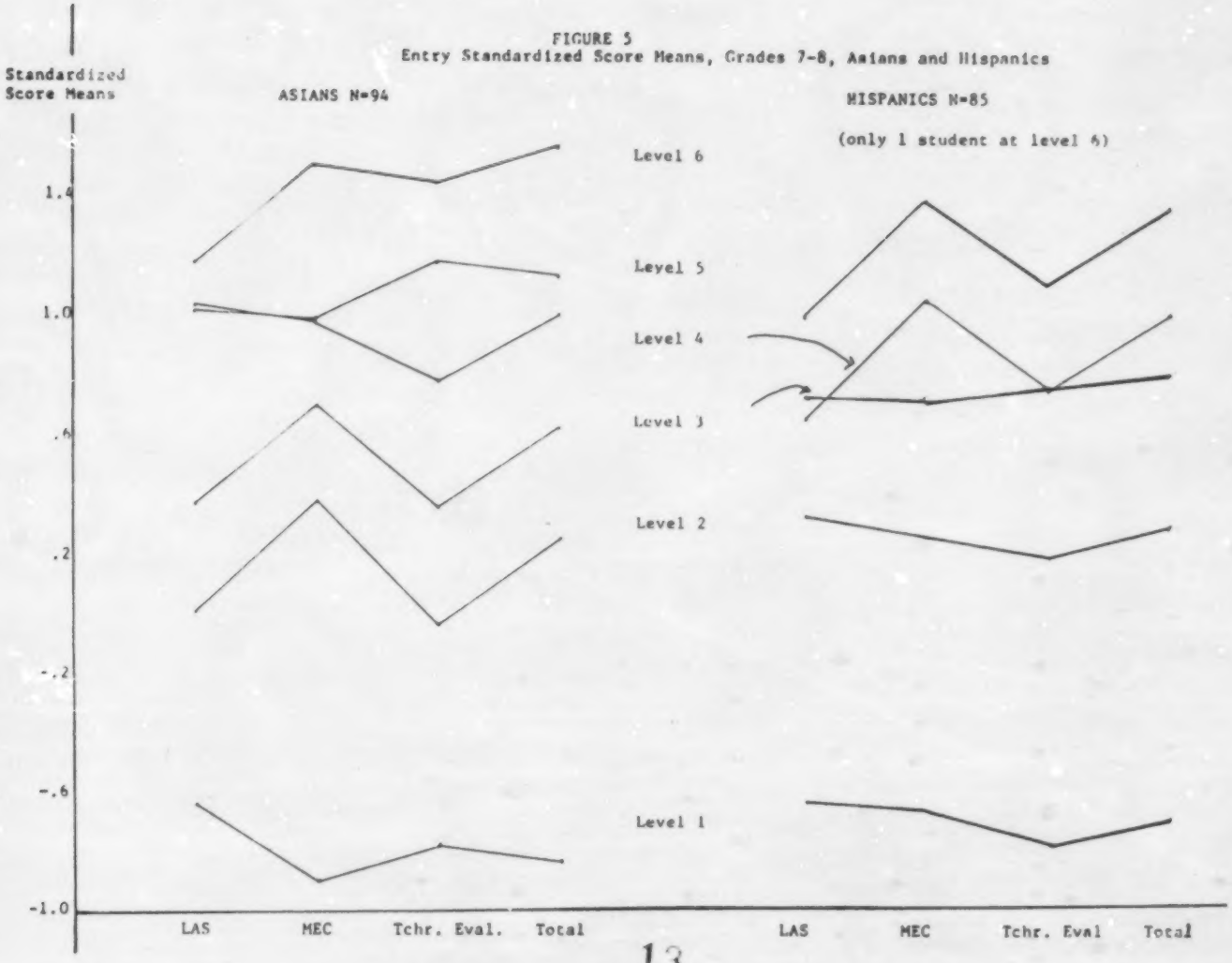

FIGURE 6
Entry Standardized Score Means, Grades 9-12, Asians and Hispanics

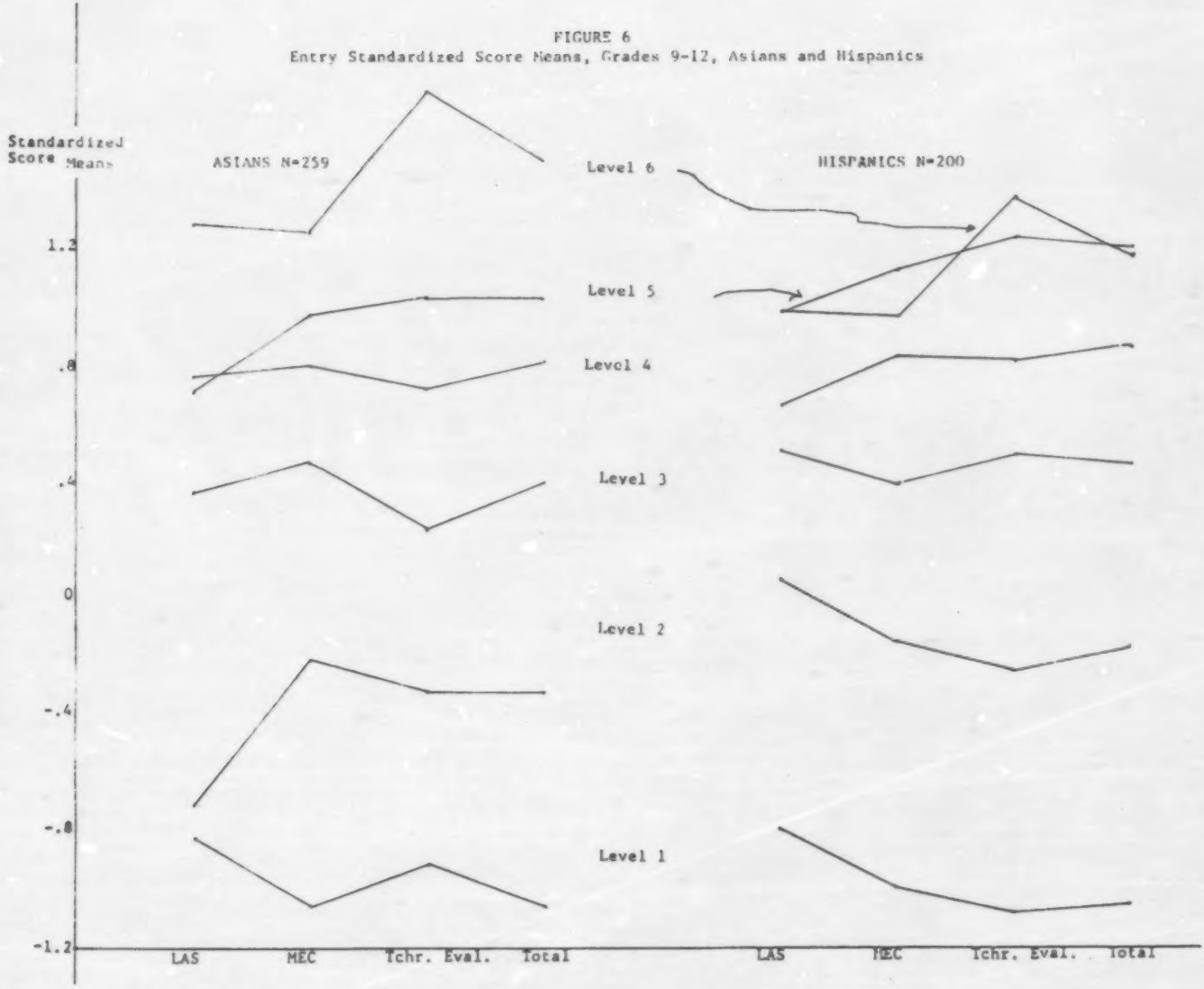

FIGURE 7

Exit Standardized Score Means, Grades K-2
Asians and Hispanics

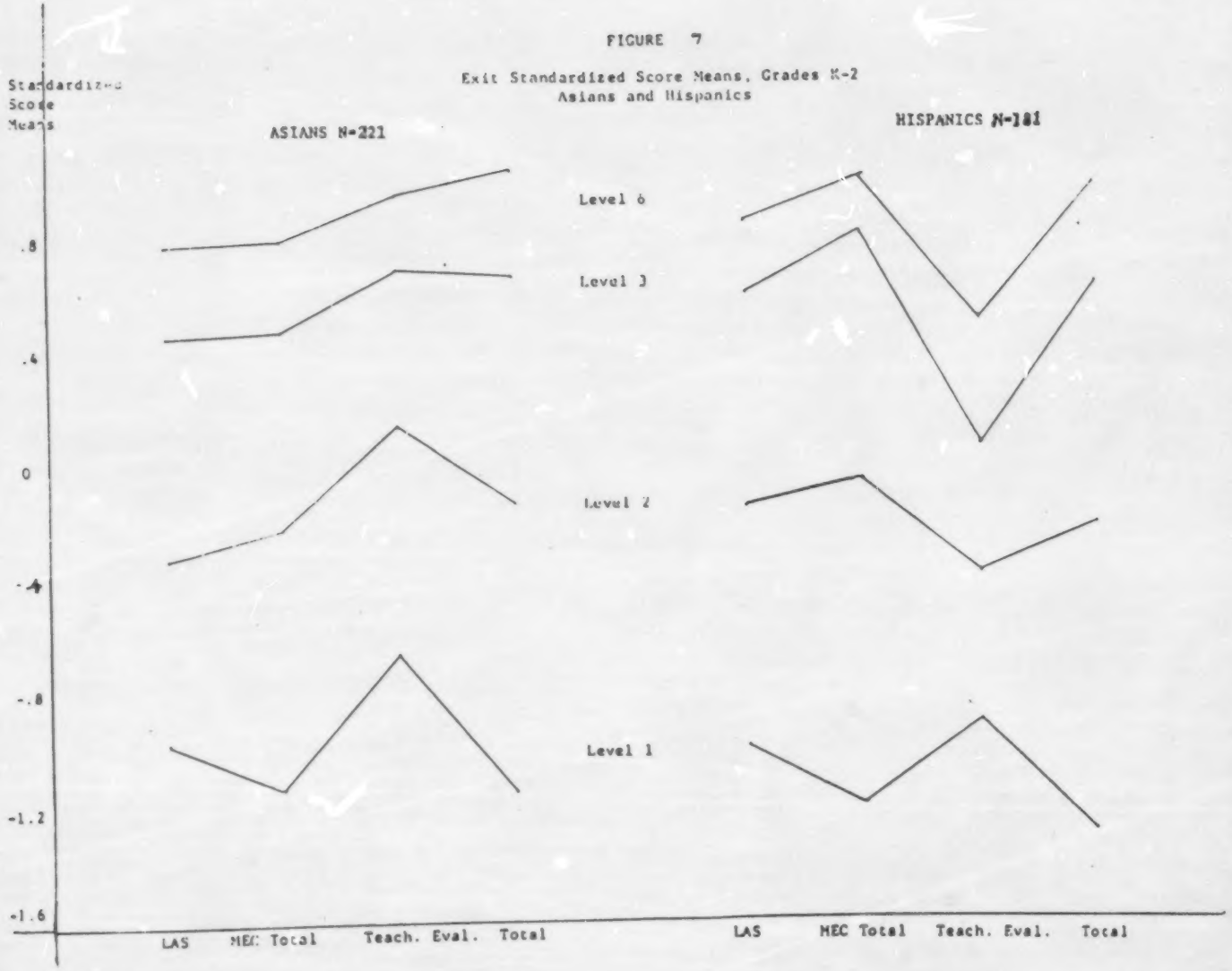

FIGURE 8

Exit Standardized Score Means, Grades 3-6

Asians and Hispanics

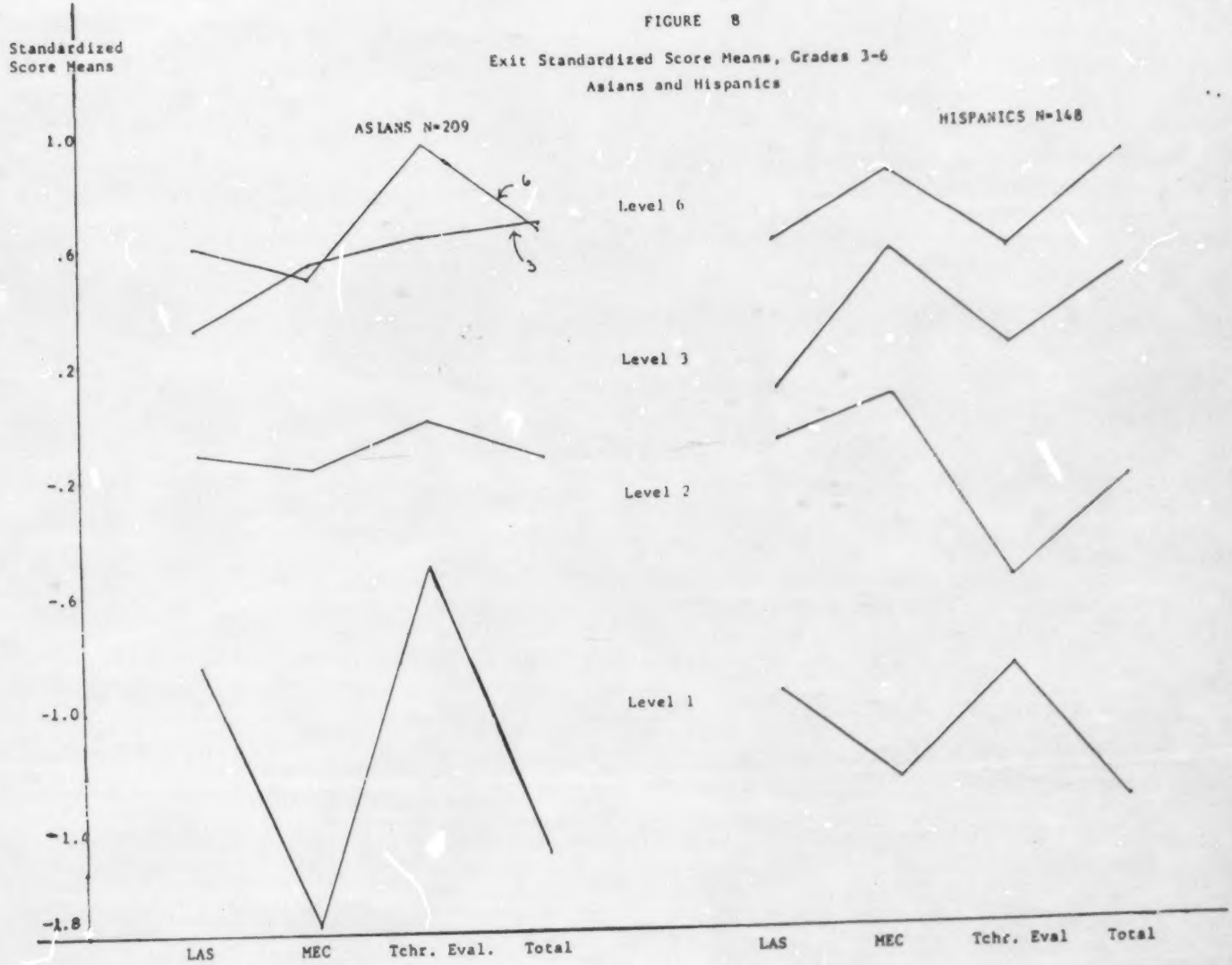

FIGURE 9

Exit Standardized Score Means, Grades 7-8
Asians and Hispanics

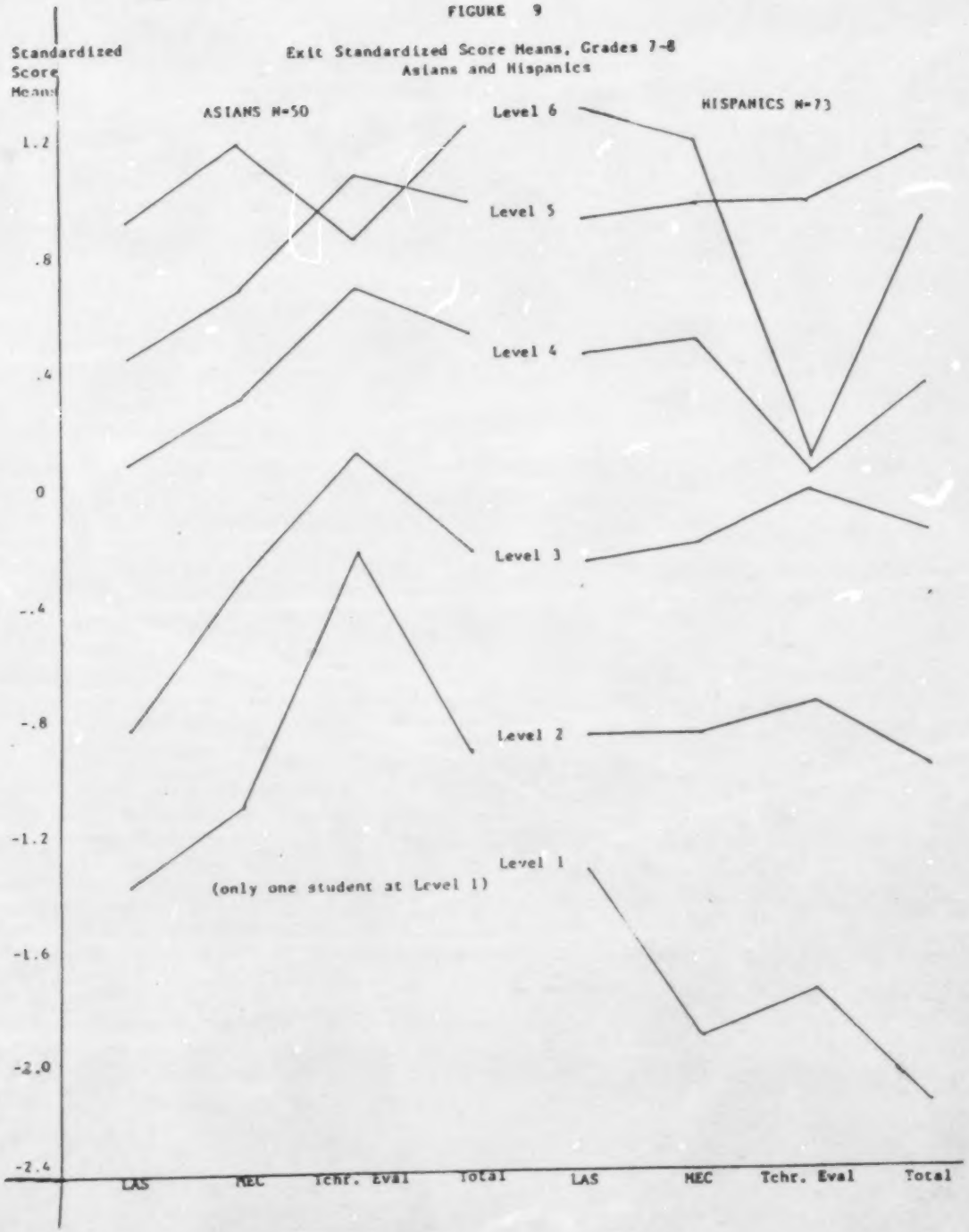

FIGURE 10

Exit Standardized Score Means, Grades 9-12
Asians and Hispanics